



Episode 1x17:  
"HERO COMPLEX"

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***THIS EPISODE CONTAINS GRAPHIC SCENES THAT MAY BE DISTURBING TO SOME READERS.***

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## Teaser

### EXT. PERSEPHONE – EAVESDOWN DOCKS – DAY

It's a sunny day in the bustling bazaar of Eavesdown Docks as MAL, ZOE, and JAYNE work their way through the crowd.

MAL

Three hours! Three hours we wait in his parlor and for what? "Hello, welcome to my mansion, please won't you have a seat, and some smelly cheese too. Oh, and by the way, get out of my house, you thief"!

JAYNE

(picking at his teeth)

Ain't nothin' wrong with free cheese, Mal, no matter how it smells.

MAL

(ignoring Jayne)

He knows we're thieves! But the second we show him that damn broken laser, he clams up.

ZOE

He's got his reasons, sir. If I were him, I wouldn't go near the Lassiter, either.

MAL

(not particularly listening)

Now he's too good to be seen with us. Y'know, Warrick Harrow used to be my very favorite lord with a sash.

It's a particularly busy day and all three of them are periodically jostled by PASSERS-BY.

ZOE

Used to be?

MAL

Well, he still is. Sometimes he really has a pair, but today was like he was gelded. Just never thought something fits under my coat would be so tough to pass along.

ZOE

You could have taken Inara up on her offer to help sell it.

MAL

Inara? Would you give that a rest! She so big on helpin' us, how come she ain't here? She was supposed to come by and change his paranoid mind to my liking.

They stop to let a MAN leading two LLAMAS pass; Jayne eyes the llamas with suspicion.

MAL (cont'd)

She didn't show because she didn't want to show. Made me look like a gorram fool.

ZOE

She's scared, Mal. Probably doesn't want to risk running into Atherton Wing.

MAL

(Sarcastic)

Ath! You think he's still holding a grudge against us, too?

JAYNE

Him and about a hundred others. Maybe you should start killin' 'em, Mal. Wouldn't have to watch our backs so gorram much.

MAL

Can't kill everyone don't agree with us, Jayne. Badger'd be the first to go, were that the case. We walk away, and it's their choice to keep a grudge. Nothing I can do about that.

JAYNE

You could kill 'em.

Mal gives him a look.

Zoe spots INARA in the crowd, working her way toward them.

ZOE

Speak of the devil.

Jayne and Mal put their hands to their guns, looking for targets. Zoe gives them her best "Why am I saddled with children?" look.

As Inara approaches, Mal closes the distance, his posture belligerent.

MAL

Where were you?

INARA

I had some business that took longer than planned. Did Lord Harrow mention my absence?

MAL

'Course he mentioned! Do I look like a whore?

Inara manages not to slap him.

INARA

That's exactly the kind of comment I don't miss when you're not around, Captain.

Jayne laughs. Inara and Zoe begin to walk away.

A KID, carrying a snatched PURSE, rushes through the crowd, angling toward Jayne.

Mal and Jayne move to follow the women.

The Kid slams into Jayne's back.

JAYNE

Hey!

Jayne whips around in annoyance, grabs the Kid with one hand and the purse with the other. The others aren't aware of this happening.

Jayne looks at the purse, which looks expensive, then at the Kid, who looks dirt poor. He lets the Kid go.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Get outta here 'fore I gut you.

Jayne begins to paw through the purse.

ANA (OS)

Oh, thank goodness!

Jayne looks up. ANA, 30-ish, attractive but not beautiful, dark hair cut short, dressed in expensive clothes matching the purse, approaches.

ANA

Thank you for stopping that thief.

JAYNE

I was just, um...

Jayne takes his hand out of her purse.

JAYNE (cont'd)  
...Lookin' for some kinda identification.

ANA  
Of course. Thank you so much.

She comes closer and he hands the purse back, perhaps a little reluctantly.

By now, the others have realized Jayne's not with them and, in the background, are returning, curious looks on their faces.

JAYNE  
(to Ana)  
Should be more careful, lady.

ANA  
Please, call me Ana.

She extends her hand. Jayne looks at it for a beat, then realizes she's expecting him to kiss it, so he does. He manages to appear almost gallant.

ANA (cont'd)  
It's so obvious I don't belong here, isn't it? You've already assisted me so much, perhaps I could impose upon you for another favor?

Mal, Zoe, and Inara are back, but when Ana smiles, it's all for Jayne.

ANA (cont'd)  
I'm looking for a ship.

#### **EXT. SERENITY – OPEN RAMP – DAY**

SHEPHERD BOOK is planted in the middle of the ramp, arms crossed, looking down at BADGER and his two THUGS, who stand on the ground, trying to appear menacing.

BADGER  
Got business wi' your captain.

BOOK  
Already told you he's not here.

BADGER  
When good Captain Reynolds does get back, you tell 'im I don't appreciate 'im settin' down in my world wi'out—

RIVER, barefoot, steps out onto the ramp behind Book, gazing directly at Badger.

BADGER (cont'd)  
Well, luv. Was 'oping I might find you 'ere. Thought  
maybe we could talk.

She begins to slowly walk down the ramp.

RIVER  
(mimicking his accent)  
Ain't no talking to you. Never listen.

BADGER  
(smiling)  
That's because so few people are worth listening to.

SIMON rushes onto the ramp from Serenity's cargo hold, apparently having been looking for River.

SIMON  
River!

Badger gives a little nod as he looks at Simon, as if Simon has just confirmed something very important.

From the crowd behind Badger...

MAL (OS)  
Thought I made myself clear last time, Badger. You don't  
come near my ship. You send a wave.

Badger turns. Mal is rushing out of the crowd toward him, followed by Zoe and Inara. Badger looks at his two Thugs as if to say "Why did I even bother bringing you?"

BADGER  
(to Mal)  
If you answered your waves, we wouldn't have this  
situation.

Mal and Badger are now face-to-face.

MAL  
Maybe you can't see it, but you don't want to be talkin' to  
me right now, Badger. Walk away.

BADGER  
(unimpressed)  
Got me 'ands on a priority bulletin a while back. Alliance  
fugitives. Thought the pretty lass in the picture looked a  
bit familiar.

Badger looks at River.

BADGER (cont'd)  
Miss River Tam, they call 'er.

He turns and smiles back at Simon.

Simon takes an angry step forward, but Book blocks him with a shake of his head.

BOOK  
Don't, son.

BADGER  
(to River)  
'ow've you been, Miss Tam?

RIVER  
Been better, luv. 'ad a right 'ard time lately, what wi' folks chasin' me down like an animal.

BADGER  
You ever need protection, luv, you tell Captain Reynolds to give me a call.  
(to Mal)  
Good thing you're always on the move, Captain. Every time the Alliance sends out a fresh warrant, I know she's okay.

MAL  
So you're saying you didn't sell us out, or you won't sell us out?

BADGER  
Captain, I'm insulted. Alliance money would be tempting, true, but 'aving them nosing around my operation? Can't 'ave that. So you see, I don't make a penny either way, do I?

RIVER  
Some folks say silence is golden.

BADGER  
My silence is certainly worth something, 'specially when it concerns a cute little lass such as yourself.

SIMON  
I've had about enough of this.

This time, Book has to physically hold him back. By now, KAYLEE and WASH are on the ramp, as well.

RIVER  
(to Badger)  
So what can a lass do to keep you golden?

BADGER  
What did you have in mind?

RIVER  
We should go dancing.

Mal doesn't really know what the hell's going on anymore, and he doesn't much care.

MAL  
(to River and Badger)  
Before you start planning a date for this thing, I'll remind you that I'm not having my best day ever.  
(to Badger)  
I still want you gone. Got a passenger wants off Persephone near as much as I do, and I don't want your ugly face 'round here scarin' her off when she shows.

BADGER  
Should be nicer to me, Captain. Show me a little respect. Persephone's my 'ome.

Mal glares. Badger smiles at him, tips his hat to River.

BADGER (cont'd)  
You send me a wave next time you're coming to Persephone, Captain.

Mal starts up the ramp, River, Zoe, and Inara in tow.

SIMON  
(to River)  
I don't want you near that guy. What were you thinking?

RIVER  
He's my friend. We talk the same.

WASH  
(to Mal)  
We have a passenger? Where?



MAL

She's with Jayne. Gettin' her stuff.

ZOE

Jayne's the one found her.

KAYLEE

Shiny! I love passengers!

WASH

Jayne found us work? Does that seem right?


As Mal and the crew head into the CARGO HOLD, Badger and his Thugs head for the CROWD.

They walk up to the Kid who snatched Ana's purse, who is waiting for them. Badger tosses him a coin. He smiles, turns, and sinks into the crowd.

Badger looks back at Serenity.

BADGER

Persephone's my 'ome, Captain.



## Act One

### INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – DAY

Mal and Ana approach Jayne and Book, who are working out on the bench press. Jayne's standing, and Book rises to sitting as the Captain and the passenger approach.

MAL

(to Ana)

Jayne you know already, and this is Shepherd Book, one of our long-term passengers.

Book stands, executes a proper bow and kisses her proffered hand, every inch the gentleman. Jayne stares at Ana, clearly captivated by her.

ANA

A preacher. On a vessel such as this. Intriguing.

BOOK

All manner of folk like to hear the good word, and this ship visits all manner of ports.

ANA

Indeed.

She gives Mal a nod, politely indicating that she's ready to move on.

ANA (cont'd)

(to Jayne)

I'll see you later.

Mal and Ana walk off, leaving Jayne and Book.

BOOK

I'm surprised Mal's still willing to take on passengers.

JAYNE

(laughs)

This one don't have no bags big enough t'hide a crazy sister.

#### **INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – DAY**

River and Kaylee are preparing food together, laughing and joking. River almost manages to pass for normal today.

Simon's at the table, working on a list of some sort, possibly a manifest of drugs onboard.

SIMON

You're sure there's nothing I can do to help?

KAYLEE

(neutral)

We're okay, Simon. But thanks.

Simon looks back at his work, feeling shut down. He glances up at Kaylee, but she's not paying attention.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

(to River)

So, like I was sayin', there was this time my dad took me to town, I couldn't'a been more'n five or six—

Ana and Mal come in. Simon looks up.

MAL  
(to Ana)  
Meals're taken here in the dining area. You're welcome to  
a fair share of what we got, and expect you might like to  
join us for sit-down meals, which—  
(points to Kaylee and River)  
—is what these young ladies is workin' on.

Kaylee and River turn and nod greeting.

MAL (cont'd)  
This is Kaylee, our engineer. And River. She's a  
passenger.

Simon stands, trying to draw some attention away from his sister.

SIMON  
Simon Tam.

MAL  
Ship's doctor.

Simon takes Ana's hand—he's the first she doesn't have to offer it to.

ANA  
Where did you train, doctor?

SIMON  
Osiris.

ANA  
Osiris! Delightful! Perhaps you know one of my friends,  
Quincy Troy?

SIMON  
Quincy? QUINCE! He was a few years—

Simon stops suddenly as Mal gives him a meaningful look: "Boy, could be you're  
talking too much."

SIMON (cont'd)  
Yes. Well. A pleasure to meet you, Miss—?

ANA  
Gurick.

Kaylee turns back to the food, uncomfortable. She looks like she wants to be  
jealous, but can't quite muster the energy.

Mal hustles Ana out of the galley, heading toward the bridge, but not before he gives Simon a “Watch your mouth, boy” glare.

# **INT. SERENITY – FORWARD HALL – CONTINUOUS**

Mal, walking down the hall, hesitates when he realizes Ana isn't following him, but has stopped a few steps behind.

MAL  
Miss Gurick?

ANA  
Captain Reynolds, I must thank you once again for making this trip.

MAL  
Price was right, ma'am.

ANA  
It's been a trying time these past few weeks...

MAL  
Trying times. You in some kinda trouble, is that it?

ANA  
My mother passed away.

She looks like she's on the verge of breaking. Mal stands awkwardly.

MAL  
Oh.  
(beat)  
That is, um, trying.

ANA (cont'd)  
Delivering her ashes to her family estate on Sinhon was... difficult, to say the least.

MAL  
I'm sure it was.

ANA  
And then, with the rumors of the transportation strike, it took me more than a week to book passage, and they would only take me so far. Three ships and more than two weeks just to get to Persephone!

Mal is cordial, but restless. He doesn't have time for a sob story.

MAL  
(clapping his hands together)  
So, how about I introduce you to the pilot? Set your mind at ease as far as timelines are concerned. You've already met Zoe, his wife. Should be on the bridge.

#### **INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – DAY**

Inara kneels in front of her table, practicing calligraphy. She takes a sip of tea, then returns to her work. She makes a line with a curve at the end.

She looks at the small sheet of paper and puts the brush down. She crumples it and throws it towards a small pile crumpled pieces of paper on the floor.

MAL (OS)  
Can I come in?

Inara stands, looks befuddled.

INARA  
*Ching jin!* <Come in>

Mal enters.

INARA (cont'd)  
Mal, are you okay? What's going on?

MAL  
Huh?

INARA  
You asked before entering. Do I need to fetch Simon?

MAL  
<Very funny>. Actually, I was thinking about y... your shuttle. Was hoping you could keep Ana occupied for a while. She was tellin' me how her mother died, and... you know... compassion just ain't one o' my strengths. Figured she might be comfortable with someone like you.

INARA  
(bemused annoyance)  
A whore, captain?

MAL  
A... Look, she's with Wash right now. Don't like having passengers on the bridge. 'Side, what are she and Wash gonna talk about?

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Wash and Ana sit in the bridge, looking bored. He nods cordially, and she nods back.

Wash opens his mouth to say something, and she leans forward expectantly.

But for once, Wash has nothing to say. There might as well be crickets on the bridge.

### **INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – SAME TIME**

Mal looks at Inara expectantly.

INARA

What do you want me to do?

MAL

I don't know. You're both women of expense.

Inara glares.

MAL (cont'd)

I mean, expensive tastes. Do what you folks do. Ain't none of my business.

INARA

None of your business? Why, Captain, this is a day of firsts. Are you certain I don't need to call Simon?

He stands awkwardly as she goes back to her table and her brush. She looks at the paper, not at him.

INARA

It's funny, Captain. I was just thinking of you before you arrived.

MAL

You were?

Inara points to the crumpled paper on the floor.

MAL (cont'd)

You saw some garbage and was thinkin' of me?

INARA

No, Captain. Calligraphy. It's so difficult to get it just right. Yet even when it's wrong in some small way, it still is a work of art. Sometimes, the flaws make it more beautiful, unique.

MAL

(missing her point)

You plannin' to leave that mess behind when you get off my boat?

Inara grimaces. The man is impossible. Why does she bother?

INARA

Yes.

MAL

Yes, you're gonna leave a mess?

INARA

Yes, you can bring Ana here. She seems like she'd be pleasant company. Wouldn't that be a refreshing change?

Mal holds her stare for a moment and walks out. Inara stays there, looking at her table. She shakes her head and puts the brush on the paper.

## **INT. SERENITY— DINING ROOM – NIGHT**

The crew and Ana sit around the table, having dinner. Everyone is clearly having a good time.

SIMON

...We had to leave his pants right there, they were such a mess!

Most folks laugh as Simon finishes his story. Jayne looks more than a little jealous. Kaylee, again, manages to just look uncomfortable.

ANA

No!

SIMON

I swear!

ANA

Goodness, that's quite a story, Doctor. Next time I wave Quincy I'll have to tell him about it.

Mal and Simon share a look.

SIMON

Miss Gurick, I'd appreciate it if you didn't.

ANA

(playful)

Have you just broken the Hippocratic oath or something?

Simon smiles awkwardly and looks down at his food.

RIVER

(mimicking Ana's speech patterns)

Please do excuse my brother. Family can be so difficult, can't it?

River stares straight at Ana, who squirms a bit under her steady, intense gaze.

Awkward beat.

INARA

So, Ana, you were telling me earlier that you live on Sherwood now?

ANA

Yes, my family's ancestral home. It was my mother's really...

(beat)

My father's often away on business, and I spend most of my time there. My best friend, Mia, lives on the other side of the planet and her parents have set aside a room for me, so I suppose you could say I have two homes. Three, if you count the family yacht.

MAL

Only one place you can call home, miss. Ours is here. 'Cept...

He finds himself looking at Inara long enough for an awkward silence to begin. Inara glares at him and he looks away.

MAL (cont'd)

...'Cept the preacher, of course. He would say his is beyond them bright an' pearly gates.

BOOK

(smiling)

Mal's right. Technically, I'm a temporary resident—



ANA  
—in an alien land, yes?

Book nods and continues eating.

ANA  
So you make me choose, Captain Reynolds?  
(looks around, at the crew and the ship)  
I choose the yacht. That's my home. Yes.

WASH  
And that's the ship we're meeting over Sherwood?

ANA  
Yes, I certainly do hope that you'll spend at least a few hours onboard, if not the night. He hasn't said as much, but I'm certain that my father will be planning a belated-birthday party. We need a reason to celebrate after mother...  
(a beat)  
I would love it if you all could be there.

This is met with mixed reactions. Some, such as Simon, Inara, and Kaylee, express varying degrees of enthusiasm, while others are more of the "Hey, when did we suddenly become friends?" mindset.

MAL  
That's a very generous offer, Miss Gurick, but I don't know as that we'd fit in all that well with your friends.

ANA  
Nonsense!  
(to Simon)  
Perhaps Quincy will even be there.

Not what Simon wants to hear. That might cause complications.

SIMON  
That would be... great.

WASH  
(to Mal)  
What do you think, Cap'n?

Before Mal can say anything, Ana presses on.

ANA

I may be exaggerating, but I believe that we have the best food in the 'verse on our yacht.

(beat)

No offense to this fine meal.

River quietly leaves the table, heading into the galley, presumably to get something.

KAYLEE

None taken. Wouldn't mind something other than protein myself, every now and again.

ANA

We have a staff of five cooks, a dining room and a banquet hall... You must see the fireplace in the great room.

KAYLEE

(amazed)

Fireplace—on a ship?

Ana nods.

JAYNE

Five cooks?

Before Ana can respond, River returns, Jayne's large HUNTING KNIFE in her hand. She looks almost as if she's in a trance, standing and staring at her reflection in the shiny blade.

RIVER

See how it shines in the firelight?

Everyone reacts, mostly by backing away and yelling.

Jayne, knowing that he's a favorite target, jumps up and rushes to the far side of the room. As he goes, he checks the knife sheathe on his belt, finding it empty.

JAYNE

Pinky? Gorramit, how'd she do that?!?

Book moves slowly toward River, making eye contact with her.

BOOK

River, dear, why don't you just hand me—

With River's attention on Shepherd Book, Mal rushes her from the other side, snatching the weapon from her. River offers no resistance and simply stands there.

Mal and Book bracket her for a beat, waiting to see if she's still a threat.

RIVER  
(to Mal)  
Once, I was laconic.

MAL  
Yes, darlin', you certainly were.

He motions for Simon to see to his sister. As Simon moves forward and takes River by the hand, Mal hands the knife back to Jayne, glaring at the big merc.

MAL  
Didn't I warn you—

JAYNE  
Was on my hip, Mal! Don't know how she did it!

In the background, Simon escorts River out. Mal looks at Jayne like he's about to say more, but Ana intervenes.

ANA  
I think this is enough excitement for one evening.  
(to Kaylee)  
The meal was wonderful.  
(to Jayne)  
Mister Cobb, would you mind escorting me to my room?

Jayne looks to Mal for approval. The captain nods.

Ana holds out her arm and Jayne takes it and squires her out of the room.

Those who remain look at each other for a beat.

WASH  
Good times. I hope she saved some surprises for the party!

## **INT. SERENITY – PASSENGER DORM HALLWAY – NIGHT**

Jayne brings Ana to the door of her room.

JAYNE  
Talk to Mal yet?

She shakes her head.

ANA

I don't believe the time is right.

JAYNE

Be in Sherwood soon enough. Time better be right  
gorram soon.

(beat)

I don't like lyin' to Mal.

She opens the door to her room.

ANA

A moment, Mister Cobb.

She goes inside HER ROOM, leaving Jayne in the hall, looking around suspiciously.

She returns quickly, holding a piece of paper.

JAYNE

What's this?

ANA

I did this for you.

She hands it to him. It's a piece of calligraphy, with a single character.

ANA (cont'd)

It means "solitary warrior."

He just looks at her.

ANA (cont'd)

You don't think it was just luck that placed you in my  
path on Persephone, do you? It was fate. It was destiny.  
You are my champion. My hero.

JAYNE

(uncomfortable)

Don't say that. I ain't no hero.

ANA

You'll do what needs to be done to save my family.

Jayne takes a step back from her.

JAYNE

Tellin' ya, I don't like lyin' to the captain.

ANA

You can convince him to help.

JAYNE

I can't convince Mal o' nothin'. Captain's a lotta things, not all of 'em pretty, but he ain't no assassin.

ANA

My dear Mister Cobb, it's not an assassination I require. I merely need an obstacle removed. An obstacle that is destroying the family business and driving the family to ruin.

JAYNE

Call it what you want, he ain't gonna go for it.

She looks at him hard.

ANA

But we still have our deal, yes?

A beat.

Then Jayne nods.

JAYNE

I do it alone, you still pay me like the whole crew helped out.

ANA

That was our deal, Mister Cobb. I assure you, my word is good.

Jayne still looks unhappy.

JAYNE

Captain ain't gonna go for it, I'm telling you. Ain't his kinda job.

ANA

(smiling)

Perhaps when we get to Sherwood, he'll change his mind. My father can be most persuasive.

## **INT. PRISTINE OFFICE – NIGHT**

The office is expensive but tasteful. We are behind a massive CHAIR at a desk, so we cannot see who is seated in the chair, but can see what they see, Ana's face on a COMMUNICATIONS SCREEN.

BRIAN, a muscular giant of a man, his head completely shaved (including eyebrows), stands protectively next to the mysterious MAN IN THE CHAIR.

BRIAN

Line's secure, sir. Encrypted signal.

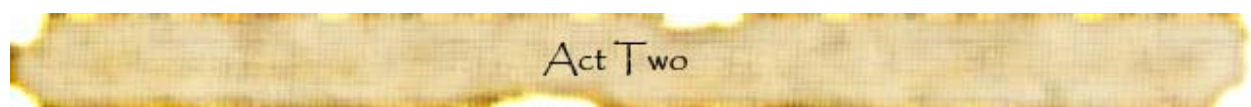
ANA

Everything is going brilliantly, Father. The locals I contracted did their part, and we should be at Sherwood in a little more than a day.

(beat)

It will be so very good to be back home. I can't wait to see you! I trust you'll allow me my party before things turn... unpleasant.

She smiles and the screen goes black.



## Act Two

## **INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – NIGHT**

Jayne is dressed in his Sunday best, which, really, isn't much better than his normal attire, and hovers near Ana's BAGGAGE. Book, dressed in his usual attire, is with him. Book has a smear of red, possibly lipstick, across his upper lip and cheek.

Ana and Mal enter from the UPPER CATWALK.

MAL

Look, I appreciate where you're comin' from, Miss Gurick, but that ain't the kinda job me and mine normally take.

ANA

Perhaps once you meet with my father...

MAL

I'll hear him out, but I won't make no promises.

They're heading down the stairs now, and Jayne and Book move to meet them.

ANA

I appreciate your open-mindedness, Captain Reynolds, and also must thank you for your hospitality on this voyage. I hope that I'm able to return the favor on the family yacht.

MAL

A few hours, that's all. Your daddy wants to talk to me, he'd best not dawdle, 'cause I certainly won't.

At the bottom of the stairs, Mal gives Book a look and motions him to the side, while Ana does the same with Jayne, under cover of doing a last-minute check of her baggage.

ANA

(whispers)

You were right.

Jayne gives her a "Told you so" look as they busy themselves with the baggage.

ACROSS THE CARGO HOLD

Mal talks to Book.

MAL

Thanks for stayin' behind, Shepherd.

BOOK

It's the prudent thing to do. Just bring me some—

Mal points to the red smear on Book's face.

MAL

You got somethin'...

BOOK

(sighs)

River...

He grabs a cloth from a nearby workbench and rubs his face.

MAL

Ain't blood, is it?

BOOK

Not today. Make-up of some sort.

(beat)

I'll keep an eye on things here. You call me if anything seems out of sorts.

Mal claps Book on the shoulder, then turns to Ana.

MAL  
(to Ana)  
Want to head up to watch the approach?

Mal and Ana head out, and Book bows as she leaves.

When they're gone, Book turns to Jayne.

BOOK  
This is an interesting side of you, son.

JAYNE  
I hate getting like this, all awkward and gentleman-like. Most women I got no problem with. But her, she never talks down to me, you know? I can actually talk to her.

BOOK  
Never thought you'd be saving a damsel in distress, but here we are nonetheless.

JAYNE  
It's her eyes. She's like a cat. Woman like that could get you in a lot of trouble if you let her.

He gazes up to where Ana exited with Mal.

## **EXT. SPACE**

In the space above the planet SHERWOOD, SERENITY approaches Ana's family YACHT, a ship more than five times Serenity's length. The luxurious vehicle is rounded, with lines similar to a traditional luxury liner like the "Titanic."

The starboard side of the yacht, which we can see, contains airlocks for a half dozen ships, and an open deck where smaller shuttles can land. A half dozen SHUTTLES and an expensive-looking VESSEL, half the size of Serenity, have docked with the yacht.

Although the yacht is clearly an expensive and well-appointed vehicle, the majority of the lights are off, with activity apparently limited to a few sections of the vessel.

Serenity moves forward smoothly, docking with one of the yacht's available airlocks.



## **INT. THE GURICK – AIRLOCK – NIGHT**

The room looks expensive. CAPTAIN NEWSTEAD, fifties, proper, waits with a half dozen ATTENDANTS, all dressed in naval-looking white uniforms. A GUARD, dressed in black, stands near the AIRLOCK DOOR.

The door opens, releasing a hiss and a cloud of steam.

Ana, dressed in an expensive-looking gown rushes out.

ANA  
Captain Newstead!

The Captain executes a bow, as do the attendants.

NEWSTEAD  
Miss Anastasia. How good to have you back onboard.

Ana rushes forward and, before Newstead can stop her, she plants an excited kiss on his cheek.

Meantime, the attendants surge forward and collect her baggage from Mal, Jayne, and Wash. Wash is dressed in vaguely format attire, Mal has added a clean jacket to his usual outfit, and Jayne is now wearing a big white COWBOY HAT, which he, apparently, thinks is cunning.

The guard has a handheld version of the X-RAY/WEAPON-DETECTING DEVICE used in "Shindig." Mal holds up his hands, indicating he's unarmed for the party, and the guard begins to search the crew quickly and efficiently.

As the baggage is handed off, Inara, Kaylee, and Zoe move past and Ana introduces them to Newstead. Inara looks elegant as always, Kaylee wears her outfit from "Shindig", and Zoe, looking very out of place, wears her usual clothing, although neatly pressed.

JAYNE  
Even the walls look expensive.

NEWSTEAD  
Welcome to the Gurick. My Name is Captain Newstead.

The guard with the DEVICE scans Jayne, hitting Pinky. He looks to Newstead, who, without missing a beat, nods that Jayne can keep the knife.

WASH  
The Gurick? She has a ship named after her?  
(to Mal and Zoe)  
How do I get a ship named after me?

NEWSTEAD

(formal)

Actually, the ship is named after Miss Ana's mother's family name.

(beat)

So, who is the captain of the Firefly-class vessel?

MAL

That'd be my boat. Malcolm Reynolds.

Newstead moves forward and offers his hand to Mal.

NEWSTEAD

Captain.

MAL

Captain.

Meantime, Ana has pulled Zoe and Kaylee to the side. She looks at Zoe's outfit skeptically.

ANA

My dear, we simply must do something about your clothing.

ZOE

No, I don't think—

KAYLEE

Come on, Zoe! It's fun to dress up.

Wash overhears.

WASH

Sure, honey. Just look at Jayne.

They all look at Jayne in his big white hat.

ZOE

(sighs)

Maybe...

Ana takes her by the arm.

ANA

Come! Come!

(to Newstead)

Captain, I'll be taking these beautiful women to my chambers. Please convey the gentlemen to the party.

NEWSTEAD  
(flustered)  
Party, Miss Ana?

ANA  
You don't think Father is capable of keeping secrets from me, do you?

He looks down for a beat, as the women rush out in a hustle of satin and leather, then turns back to Mal.

NEWSTEAD  
Captain, I haven't been on an aught-three in years. I would love a tour of your ship, if you don't mind.

Mal offers a genuine smile. He likes this guy.

MAL  
Funny. Was gonna say the same thing.

NEWSTEAD  
I would be honored.

Simon and River now come to the corridor. He's dressed formally, and she's wearing a short summer dress and no shoes. She does, however, have on quite a bit of make-up. So much, in fact that she looks almost clownish.

SIMON  
I still think you should be wearing something less ...revealing.

RIVER  
Inara tried to do my make-up. Calligraphy on my face. I changed the characters. Don't they look beautiful?

Simon is distracted when he catches one of the attendants looking at River's legs. Simon glares.

With Simon and River here, the airlock door closes behind them with a hiss that is sinister.

A beat.

Newstead looks at one of the attendants.

NEWSTEAD  
Robert, will you escort the crew to the party? Captain Reynolds and I will take a brief tour and join you shortly.

WASH  
(to Mal)  
Want me to tag along, Captain?

Mal glances at the two guards, who look more ceremonial than anything.

MAL  
Not this time, Wash. Should be okay.

JAYNE  
Come on, little man. Food's this way.

WASH  
I hope there's a buffet. I love a buffet.

River comes up behind Jayne and stares at him.

JAYNE  
(to River)  
What?

She looks at him, sadly. Shakes her head disapprovingly.

RIVER  
Get oranges this time. Apples make me sick now.

## **INT. THE GURICK – HALLWAY – NIGHT**

Mal and Newstead walk, speaking comfortably.

NEWSTEAD  
So, you see, Captain, it's apples and oranges. You walk the Gurick like you're planet-side, but you can't maneuver. At full speed, it takes the better part of a day to fully come about, there so much inertia on this thing.

MAL  
Yeah, we're a bit more nimble'n that.

## **INT. THE GURICK – GREAT ROOM – SAME TIME**

The great room is exactly that, an elaborately appointed chamber more than four times the size of Serenity's cargo hold. The furniture, including a number of comfortable looking chairs and tables, is all dark wood and rich leather.

The room is filled with close to one hundred GUESTS, in addition to our crew. The guests are dressed in expensive clothing, clearly wealthy, and include a number of men and women who are Ana's contemporaries.

Wash and Jayne are at one of the tables, where there's a magnificent spread of FOOD. Wash has a plate which he keeps piling higher, and Jayne is eating directly from the buffet, much to the amusement and/or disgust of the others.

Simon is talking comfortably with a group of guests, including MIA'S FATHER. Simon seems to be enjoying himself in his element, but is also a bit distracted as he watches River wander through the room.

SIMON  
(to Mia's Father)  
So the Alliance won't intervene?

MIA'S FATHER  
Too expensive. My Mimi over there, had reservations to go skiing, but everything was canceled after the incident. The whole region is a red zone now. Population too low to move troops in...

Ana, Inara, Kaylee, and Zoe enter. Zoe is dressed in a dark, slinky dress.

Ana spots Mia and runs to her. The women kiss one another on the cheek and embrace.

ANA  
Mia!

Wash is among the many men starting at Zoe.

WASH  
Whoa.

Not taking his eyes off his wife, he sets his heavily-laden plate down. Jayne leers at Zoe, then notices the plate. Another look at Zoe, then he picks up Wash's plate and walks off with it.

Wash approaches Zoe.

WASH  
I should've bought you a slinky dress a long time ago.

ZOE  
Yes, you should have.

They kiss.

## INT. THE GURICK – BRIDGE – NIGHT

The bridge is large and comfortable, with huge WINDOWS and six positions, three on either side of the largest window, although only two are currently occupied by white-uniformed OFFICERS wearing headsets. Two black-uniformed GUARDS, looking a little more competent than the one at the airlock, stand near the door.

Mal and Newstead stand near the window. Newstead is looking out into space, but Mal can't help but glance at the guards.

NEWSTEAD

Never thought I'd like it, but now I wouldn't go back to a standing bridge. You have all your controls close at hand—

MAL

You got an awful lotta guards for a yacht, Captain Newstead.

NEWSTEAD

Perhaps Miss Ana didn't explain what her father does for a living. He's a merchant and trader, and has made a number of enemies. The guards here give him a sense of security, particularly with respect to Miss Ana's safety.

Mal opens his mouth to comment further, but—

OFFICER

Sir?

Newstead nods for the officer to continue.

OFFICER (cont'd)

Miss Ana's father would like to thank Captain Reynolds personally for bringing his daughter here.

(beat, as the officer listens to his headset)

He would also like to remind the Captain that his crew is enjoying our hospitality.

Mal doesn't say a word, but he sees it so clearly now: Doesn't know how or why, but he knows he's been suckered. And right now, there's no way out.

The door to the bridge opens, and four more GUARDS come in. Newstead looks very tired.

NEWSTEAD

Captain Reynolds... If you would please come with us...

## **INT. THE GURICK – GREAT ROOM – SAME TIME**

The party continues. Simon is seated at one of the comfortable chairs in front of the fireplace. The other chair is empty, but Simon, staring at the fire, doesn't seem to notice. Kaylee comes up to stand next to him.

SIMON

We used to have a fireplace like that on Osiris.

KAYLEE

Wasn't like this one, you can be sure of it. We're on a ship. You can't imagine the amount of rigging there must be behind that brick wall. Must've cost a fortune.

Simon glances up at Kaylee, but she's staring at the fireplace.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

They must have to filter it all. Your fireplace just blew the smoke out into the atmo...

Simon looks around, finally notices that the other chair is empty.

SIMON

Where's River?

## **ACROSS THE ROOM**

Ana makes her way towards Jayne. He is eating from Wash's plate, sees her approach, nods and pats his hip. His sheathe is empty. His eyes widen.

JAYNE

(mouth full)

Where's Pinky?

## **INT. THE GURICK – HALLWAY – SAME TIME**

River wanders down the hallway alone, carrying Jayne's hunting knife.

## **INT. THE GURICK – GREAT ROOM – NIGHT**

Kaylee is talking to some of Ana's friends, including Mia. The girls seem to have accepted her as one of their own.

KAYLEE

Thanks so much, but it was bought in a store, you know.

MIA

So was mine. We worked on it a bit. My mother loves to "design", but I don't much care, as long as it makes a few heads turn!

They all giggle and look across the room to where Ana is talking with Jayne. Some of the ladies seem to like Simon, who is

ACROSS THE ROOM

Talking to Zoe. Wash is, not surprisingly, is back at the buffet table.

ZOE

(to Simon)

What do you mean you can't find her?

She trails off as Brian enters the room, tall, bald and sinister. He makes a beeline for Zoe.

In the background, Jayne also sees this and moves toward them.

BRIAN

(to Zoe)

Good evening, Mrs. Washburne. I need you to listen very carefully. If you want your captain and the shepherd to live.

Zoe looks around. Suddenly, there are two GUARDS at each door.

Suckered, gorrammit.

Zoe looks at Jayne, who appears ready for action, shakes her head.

ZOE

Not the place. Not the time. They have the Captain.

Jayne backs down, looks at Ana, who will not meet his gaze.

BRIAN

We will escort you out of this room quietly, one at a time...

JAYNE

(mutters, glares at Ana)

This wasn't part of the plan.



## **INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – SAME TIME**

Book comes onto the UPPER CATWALK, apparently having heard something.

BOOK

Captain?

(beat, as he scans)

River?

RIVER (OS)

Sorry, Shepherd.

Book looks down as THREE RED DOTS from laser sights suddenly appear on his chest.

Four GUARDS are in the cargo hold. Three have rifles pointed at Book, and the fourth has Jayne's hunting knife to River's throat.

RIVER (cont'd)

Should've locked up Pinky with the others.

## **INT. THE GURICK – SECURITY DOOR – SAME TIME**

Newstead, Mal, and the four GUARDS following them stop in front of a large airlock-type SECURITY DOOR. Mal looks around nervously, trying to find a way out, but the Guards have their weapons trained at his back and are far enough away that he can't rush them both.

He glares at Newstead, who looks down, ashamed, and refuses to make eye contact.

The security door opens in a hiss of steam. Two more armed Guards step out, and a smaller FIGURE, obscured by the steam, lingers behind.

The Figure finally steps through the fog. It's ADELAID NISKA, virtually bouncing with excitement, dressed to kill, smooth and sharp.

NISKA

Welcome aboard, Captain Reynolds. Thank you for bringing my daughter home.

## Act Three

### **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – DAY**

CLOSE-UP of Niska's smiling face.

NISKA

Ah, Captain Reynolds. So good to see you are up and about. This is a very exciting day, yes?

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – SAME TIME**

The antechamber is a small room with a single door. Mal is in the center of the room, strapped into a painful-looking metal CONTRAPTION. He's standing, his arms spread, practically crucified.

The wall he faces is dominated by a WINDOW that looks into the torture room. Our angle is such that we can see Niska through the mirror, but cannot see anything else in the torture room.

MAL

What's gonna be exciting is when I get outta this thing and stop that voicebox of yours from squawking... permanently.

When Niska speaks, his voice is tinny, coming through a speaker into Mal's room.

NISKA

This is not what will happen, Captain Reynolds. Perhaps you do not understand that your crew is under my power. Your entire crew.

Mal glares.

### **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM/ANTECHAMBER – SAME TIME**

NISKA

You are a simple man, Captain. You live in a world of gray, but you see things in black and white. So, perhaps, you will not understand what this is about. You are thinking this is vengeance, yes?

Mal strains against the straps.

MAL

Gonna be when I'm loose.

NISKA

Because of you, I am no longer respected. No longer feared. My reputation, yes, is dust. Because of you, my business no longer is good. But today is not about you. Not about vengeance.

Niska pauses, as if to make sure that Mal is listening.

NISKA (cont'd)

Vengeance will not bring my business back, or return by beloved Veronica to me. If I break you, however... If I destroy the good hero Captain Malcolm Reynolds, whose crew so valiantly stood up to the terrible Niska...

Niska takes out a small cloth and cleans his glasses, as if Mal is beneath his notice.

NISKA (cont'd)

Then... Then, my reputation is solid again. Then, Adelai Niska is to be feared, yes?

(beat)

But we have a dilemma, do we not, Captain? When we met last, I killed you—

MAL

And I let you live. Not a mistake I'll be repeatin'.

NISKA

So. How to break a man who has died once already? You see what we will do, yes? Today is not about you, Captain...

## **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – SAME TIME**

Well pull back and can now see the entire room. Behind Niska is Brian, looking tall and sinister. To either side of Brian is another CONTRAPTION similar to Mal's.

They are positioned facing each other, and Wash and Zoe are strapped in.

NISKA

Today is about your valiant crew.

He hits a button, and his side of the window goes opaque, turning it into a ONE-WAY MIRROR.

## **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – SAME TIME**

CLOSE-UP of Mal's face.

WASH (OS)  
(tinny, through the speaker)  
No, no! Don't touch her! Me! Hit me! Please!

Mal's jaw tightens.

## **INT. THE GURICK – BRIDGE – DAY**

Newstead and Ana are on the walkway, looking out into space. They speak in quiet tones.

NEWSTEAD  
...first time I've seen him since you left. The upper decks have been off limits for weeks. The cooks are afraid to even cook for him, since Maurice disappeared. Morale is so low among the crew, and Brian... He walks around the lower decks as if he owns the very world beneath us.

ANA  
Captain...

Newstead looks over his shoulder, giving a nervous glance to the GUARDS at the door of the bridge.

NEWSTEAD  
I hate to speak of your father so, but since your mother...

ANA  
(bitter)  
He killed her as surely as if he'd pulled the trigger himself.

NEWSTEAD  
Miss Ana, I don't even know how we'll keep the ship afloat. We can barely afford fuel, and all he does is order more and more equipment that Brian brings to the upper decks. Heaven knows what he's doing up there. I suspect he may be building some sort of gulag—

ANA  
Captain!

Newstead stops, realizing the panic that has crept into his voice.

ANA  
Eddie, please...

She puts a comforting hand on his arm.

ANA (cont'd)  
Stay with me on this. I have a solution. Things are going to change around here. It's going to be alright.

### **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – DAY**

There is now only one contraption, and it faces the one-way mirror. Kaylee, currently unconscious, is strapped in.

Niska and Brian look at her in annoyance.

NISKA  
That was certainly disappointing.

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – SAME TIME**

Mal's eyes are wet.

NISKA (OS)  
(tinny, through speaker)  
Next, Brian, please bring me someone with some stamina. We want to have a little fun, yes?

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANA'S ROOM – DAY**

Ana's room is that of a girl with expensive tastes. Everything is beautiful, and a number of PIECES OF ART decorate the room.

Jayne is asleep on the bed, snoring. A loud BEEPING sounds from across the room and he wakes with a start.

JAYNE  
Whuh?

Across the room, the dresser's MIRROR transforms into a screen, an image of Ana's face.

ANA  
I can only speak for a moment, before the guards become suspicious.

JAYNE

What the gorram hell happened?

ANA

You were stunned. The entire crew was—

He's off the bed and at the mirror, as if he can strike at Ana through it.

ANA (cont'd)

It was the only way to get you here. An unavoidable complication.

JAYNE

Better un-complicate it.

ANA

I need to explain a few things, Mister Cobb. I was not entirely honest with you.

Jayne grimaces.

JAYNE

(sarcastic)

Yeah? You think?

ANA

The obstacle that needs to be removed... The man destroying my father's business...

(beat)

It is my father.

## **INT. THE GURICK – CELL BLOCK – SAME TIME**

The cell block is a short hallway with five barred cells on either side. Simon, River, Book, Inara, Zoe, and Wash are each in a cell. Zoe and Wash are battered and cut.

Two GUARDS are securing the unconscious Kaylee in a cell, while Brian stands watch.

SIMON

Let me see her. I'm a doctor. Please.

As the guards close Kaylee's door, Brian turns to them and points his chin at Simon.

BRIAN

He'll do.

## **INT. THE GURICK – ANA’S ROOM – SAME TIME**

Jayne stares sullenly at Ana’s image, somewhere between hurt and furious.

ANA

Mister Cobb, please stay with me. As I say, I only have a few moments. I convinced him to give you to me as a gift—

JAYNE

A what?

ANA

But the rest of your crew are currently enjoying his, shall we say, hospitality. Eliminating my father is the only way to free them.

JAYNE

Where’s the old man?

ANA

The upper decks. I’ll come and get you shortly. Don’t worry.

JAYNE

Make it quick. I don’t sit too well in a cage.

Ana relaxes slightly.

ANA

So we still have deal? You’ll go through with this?

JAYNE

Don’t seem like I got a ruttin’ choice, do I?

(beat)

But I want double.

## **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – DAY**

Niska and Brian loom over Simon, Niska is holding a scalpel, and there are already rows of tiny cuts on Simon’s hands and arms.

NISKA

You are the ship’s physician, yes? So, tell me, please, when you are injured, who it is who heals you?

Niska lovingly adds another cut to the collection on Simon’s arm.

SIMON

Go to hell.

NISKA

Ah, yes, I will meet you there, as they say.

(to Brian)

This, this is the fire I was looking for. This was a good selection.

BRIAN

Shall we bring his sister in next, sir?

Simon tries to tear himself out of the chair and at Niska.

SIMON

No! Don't you touch her, you bastard!

Niska hops back with a little laugh.

NISKA

Oh, ho!

He holds his hand out and Brian hands him a tiny antique SALT SHAKER.

Niska takes it delicately, and sprinkles a bit of salt onto Simon's freshest wounds, causing the doctor to wince.

Brian then moves in and puts his hands over the wound, GRINDING the salt in.

Simon screams.

Careful of the shaker, Niska claps gleefully.

NISKA

Excellent. Oh, yes! The more you scream, doctor, the easier, perhaps, it will go for your sister.

Simon screams louder.

## **INT. THE GURICK – ANA'S ROOM – SAME TIME**

Ana doesn't miss a beat.

ANA

Double? Yes. Done. A final request, however. The crew members in white uniforms are retainers of my mother's family. They are my father's prisoners as surely as your crew is. Please promise me you won't hurt them.



JAYNE

Listen, lady, I don't make no promises I ain't gonna keep.

She's not happy to hear that.

ANA

I'll come for you shortly, but please look under my pillow.  
I've left you a present. It was the best I could do with  
security being what it is.

Her face winks out and the mirror is once again just a mirror.

JAYNE

(mutters)

Gorrammit.

He moves back to the bed and grabs the pillow, tossing it across the room.

His HUNTING KNIFE ("Pinky") is underneath.

#### **INT. THE GURICK — TORTURE ROOM — DAY**

River is strapped in. Niska is starting to look a bit disheveled, tired and old.

RIVER

I know you.

NISKA

Stop saying that!

He slaps her across the face, presumably, not for the first time.

She smiles and looks deep into his eyes.

RIVER

I know you.

NISKA

You don't know me.

RIVER

The real you.

It's clear that Niska has been unable to break her in any way, and he's starting to fall apart.

NISKA

Brian?

He motions for Brian to move forward to strike her.

RIVER

Apples, oranges. Doesn't matter. All the same. All red.

Brian slaps her. HARD. Her head snaps back, and, disturbingly, she GIGGLES.

RIVER (cont'd)

Your hands will bruise but not scar! They aren't blue!

### **INT. THE GURICK – QUARTERS – DAY**

A GUARD stands outside one of the doors. Ana walks down the hall to him.

ANA

I would like to see my guest.

GUARD

Your father's orders are you're not to be left alone with him.

She gives him a "Very well, yes" nod.

The Guard unlocks and opens the door, always keeping one hand on his FIREARM.

As he turns his attention away from Ana, she reveals a palm-sized DEVICE she was hiding. She moves closer to the Guard and places it on his neck.

There's an electric sizzle and the Guard drops to the ground, stunned.

ANA

Alright, Mister Cobb—

She draws up short as she looks into her room. Jayne is sitting on the bed, casually cleaning his fingernails with Pinky, but the room is a disaster area. The bedsheets are torn, the dressers have been knocked over, anything that's breakable has been broken... It looks like a tornado has hit this room.

Jayne grins up at her.

JAYNE

Told you I don't sit well in a cage.

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – DAY**

Mal has his eyes closed. Whatever is going on in the other room has brought him close to his limit.

Through the speaker, the sound of a fist hitting flesh, then—

BOOK (OS)  
(tinny, through speaker)  
Shan Yu was five foot, six. Just like Napoleon. Did you know that?

BAM. Another punch is heard.

BOOK (OS)  
Inferiority complex, I say.

BAM!

Book coughs.

BOOK (OS)  
Exactly how tall are you, Mister Niska?

#### **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – SAME TIME**

The only thing keeping Book up is the fact that he's strapped to the chair. He's bruised and battered, with a bloody nose and one eye swollen shut. Seems like he's taken the brunt of Niska's frustration with River.

Niska's falling apart even more than he was with River. He seems almost to be aging by the minute.

He holds out his hand to Brian, who hands him a sizzling ELECTRIC PROD. With the device in his hand, he seems to gain a little composure.

Niska pokes Book, who screams. Niska smiles. He backs away, hands the prod back to Brian, and runs a hand through his hair. He licks his lips.

NISKA  
How familiar are you with the works of Shan Yu?

Book opens his good eye and looks up.

BOOK  
How familiar are you with the Gospels? Go on.  
(turns his head)  
Here's my other cheek.

## **INT. THE GURICK – ANA’S ROOM – DAY**

Jayne bends down and picks up the Guard’s gun with his free hand (he’s still holding Pinky).

He looks at Ana.

JAYNE

Got some kinda cunnin’ plan to get me to your daddy so’s  
I can kill ‘im?


ANA

I have a route laid out. You should be able to avoid most  
of guards, until you get to the upper levels—

As she talks, he circles around behind her. Suddenly, he grabs her and whips her around, bringing the knife to her throat.

JAYNE

S’okay, I got a plan of my own, little lady.



## *Act Four*

## **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – DAY**

Niska stands in front of the mirror, smiling to Mal, although he can’t see him. Behind him, Inara is strapped in. She’s crying and red-faced, with bruises up and down her arms.

Brian stands over her, holding a tray of acupuncture needles in one hand. A FLAMING TORCH flickers at his side. After passing a NEEDLE through the fire, red hot, he sticks it in Inara’s neck next to two others. She whimpers.

Niska looks back, excited, little eyes gleaming in the firelight.

NISKA

(to Mal)

Brian is... quite the man. Not of your caliber, Captain Reynolds, but quite effective. I told him not to scar her beautiful face. Her beautiful body. But beneath the surface, all is, how you say, fair game, yes?

## **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – SAME TIME**

Mal's jaw is so tight his teeth should crack any minute. He can see Niska, with Inara behind him.

NISKA

(tinny, through speaker)

You do not need to worry, Captain. She will live. She will appear... undamaged. And after Brian has finished his work, she will feel no pain ever again. Of course, she will feel no pleasure as well. Unfortunate for her line of work, but this is the tradeoff, yes?

(he smiles)

She will feel nothing when I let my troopers have her—those poor little boys have never known the love of a companion—which should be a comfort to you.

Mal rages against the straps that bind him in. His wrists are raw and bloody.

## **INT. THE GURICK – SECURITY STATION – SAME TIME**

This post is located on the far side of Niska's security door. Three GUARDS lounge there, inactive and bored. One of them looks at a CONSOLE with Ana's face on it. She looks nervous.

ANA

I'm here to speak with my father. Open the gate.

The Guard looks to the others, who shrug back. He hits a few buttons on his computer, and the SECURITY DOOR hisses open in a burst of steam.

Ana steps through, and, behind her, a much larger SILHOUETTE...

Now the guards realize something is wrong. They rise, reaching for their weapons, as Jayne steps through the steam firing.

White cowboy hat on his head, Alliance-style energy blaster in one hand, knife in the other, he's all John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. He tags the first guard, then the second, but—

JAYNE

Gorram piece of—

The guards lose their balance but don't drop.

Storming into the room, he plugs the first guard repeatedly—three, four, five shots—until he drops.

He turns and smashes the second guard, who is still stunned, with the gun, knocking him to the ground.

Meantime, the third guard, the one who buzzed ANA in, has hit a few more buttons on his computer.

Jayne grabs him from behind and smashes his head into the computer. HARD. There's a cracking noise.

Ana is almost to the door and back out. Jayne cuts her off in two strides.

JAYNE  
Where's Mal?

### **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – SAME TIME**

Brian looks down at a small BEEPER on his belt. There's a flashing red light.

BRIAN  
(to Niska)  
Sir, there seems to be a situation. I'd like to check it out.

Niska barely hears him. He's staring at Inara, who now has more than a dozen long needles sticking out of her neck. She looks blind with pain.

NISKA  
(absently)  
Yes, yes.

Brian puts the rest of the needles down, and leaves the room.

Niska leans in toward Inara and TWISTS one of the needles.

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – SAME TIME**

Inara's scream comes through the speaker. Mal's breathing as if he himself is the one being tortured.

NISKA (OS)  
(tinny, through speaker)  
Did you know what Brian did during the war, Captain? He was in intelligence. He asked people questions, yes, and they gave him answers.

Inara screams again.

NISKA (cont'd, OS)  
(tinny, through speaker)  
This beautiful creature, she must only answer one  
question for me.

In the torture room, Niska looks up, away from Inara, and directly at Mal.

NISKA (cont'd, OS)  
(tinny, through speaker)  
Has she seen the real Malcolm Reynolds?

### **INT. THE GURICK – UPPER DECK HALLWAY – SAME TIME**

Jayne races down the hallway. He doesn't pause as he reaches a four-way intersection; doesn't even see Brian waiting for him.

Brian clotheslines Jayne, knocking the breath out of the big merc and knocking him to the floor. Jayne's white hat goes flying, as does Pinky, leaving him unarmed.

Brian smiles down at Jayne, studying him. This man might be a challenge. He takes a step back, dropping into a defensive martial arts stance, and allows Jayne to get up.

Jayne starts to rise—

Brian licks his lips expectantly—

And is so focused on Jayne that he doesn't see Ana step into the hall, armed with one of the energy guns, and shoot him a half dozen times in the chest.

Brian dances back and topples over, possibly dead.

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMBER – MOMENTS LATER**

The door opens and Jayne rushes in. He never takes his eyes off Mal.

MAL  
Jayne?

Jayne tries to cut one of the straps with his recovered hunting knife, but the straps are too tough. He goes to work trying to free Mal, but the locks are far too complicated for him. Jayne grunts in frustration but keeps at it.

JAYNE  
I didn't know.

MAL  
What are you—

JAYNE  
In earnest, Mal, I didn't know when I took the job!

Mal's eyes go steely when he hears that, but Jayne doesn't see, because he's still trying to free the captain.

Then, through the speaker, another scream from Inara.

Mal and Jayne both look up and see Niska over Inara in the other room.

Jayne's jaw drops. He didn't see this one coming.

JAYNE (cont'd)  
NISKA?!?

He turns back to Mal, tries desperately to free him.

A whimper from Inara.

MAL  
(to Jayne)  
Go.

## **INT. THE GURICK – TORTURE ROOM – SAME TIME**

A needle is passed through the torch.

NISKA  
I am not expert in the nervous system, like Brian, but I believe...

Niska's hand shakes as he places another needle in Inara's neck. The door jiggles a little, but doesn't open.

NISKA (cont'd)  
Brian?  
(to Inara)  
So difficult to work with such distractions, yes?

Shaking his head, Niska moves to the door. He starts to open it, but Jayne SLAMS it inward, right into him. There's a loud CRACK and Niska goes flying one way, his glasses another.

Jayne is relentless, a force of nature, as Niska tries to run away from him, a tired, cowardly old man.



NISKA (cont'd)  
Brian! Brian, where are you!

### **INT. THE GURICK – ANTECHAMER – SAME TIME**

Mal, still strapped tight, watches helplessly.

Niska SLAMS against the mirror, his face smashing into it and leaving a bloody smudge. He is pinned against the mirror lifted off his feet from behind. From his angle, Mal can't see by what.

Niska is pathetic: tired, old and confused, his eyes sunken and dark. This is the real Niska, and he stares through the one-way mirror straight at Mal for a beat, mouth open and gasping. He coughs a splotch of blood against the glass.

His eyes close and he drops, out of Mal's sight. Jayne stands above and behind him, his hands covered in blood, holding Pinky. The knife is streaked with gore, but gleams in the firelight.

Jayne smiles a little and gives Mal a small nod, as if to say "I took care of it."

CLOSE-UP of Mal's unreadable face. He does not nod back.

### **INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – DAY**

CLOSE-UP of Mal, glaring, fierce and angry.

MAL  
Shepherd's gonna be laid up for near a week, others'll  
have scars for life. You don't learn a damned thing, do  
you?

Mal and Jayne are alone in the dining room, sitting across from one another. Jayne nods, accepting the sentence. He knows he made a mistake, and he looks like a whipped cur.

MAL (cont'd)  
You lied to me, Jayne. Took a job behind my back,  
endangered my crew. You got anything to say for  
yourself?

A beat. Jayne doesn't. Mal has said it all.

MAL (cont'd)  
What did you think? You'd kill Niska, bring us the coin we  
need. Save the day. Be a big hero?

JAYNE  
Mal, it wasn't like that—

Mal silences him with a hard look.

MAL  
You know Shepherd Book spoke up for you? Kaylee, too.  
Even the doctor. Said you're too stupid to try to play  
hero. Me? I don't know.

Mal stands, looks down at Jayne.

MAL (cont'd)  
Give me one good reason not to leave you on that yacht.  
Or maybe just outside it.

A beat, then Jayne looks up at Mal defiantly.

JAYNE  
You killed Niska last time, none of this woulda happened.

Mal's eyes go hard and his jaw tightens.

#### **INT. SERENITY – CARGO HOLD – SAME TIME**

Newstead, hands held over his head, stands over a small, heavy-looking CASE a little larger than a shoebox.

Wash and Zoe are there, both with guns trained on him, looking tired.

NEWSTEAD  
Miss Ana sends her apologies—

ZOE  
Probably for the best Miss Ana sent them 'stead of coming  
herself. Captain said not to shoot you if you showed.

WASH  
(trying to lighten the mood)  
I think he has a soft spot for you. Might be the uniform.

NEWSTEAD  
Miss Ana—

ZOE  
(pointedly)  
Captain said not to shoot YOU.

Newstead pushes on. He has a job to do.

NEWSTEAD

Miss Ana hopes that, when wounds have healed, you might understand that there's no need for our crews to be enemies.

Zoe looks at Wash. Wash shrugs. Might as well let the guy talk, since he's not going to shut up until he says his peace.

NEWSTEAD (cont'd)

She wishes it didn't have to be this way, as do I, but Adelai Niska needed to be eliminated. Had she not led you into his trap, someone else would have, and it's quite likely your crew would not have walked away—

WASH

Yeah, yeah. Great. Just take your coin and go!

Newstead nods. And bends to pick up the case.

ZOE

(waves the gun at him)  
You go. Leave the money.

WASH

But, honey, it's blood money.  
(beat)  
Right?

ZOE

Our blood, our money.

## **INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME**

MAL

You're off my boat.

Mal walks off tiredly.

MAL (cont'd)

You screw up one more time and you're off my boat. This is your last chance. Ain't no more.

Jayne looks up, but all he sees is Mal's back walking out of the room.

Jayne unsheathes Pinky.

Looks at his reflection in the blade.

Spits on his reflection.

Cleans the blade.

#### **EXT. SPACE**

Serenity separates from the Gurick and the vessels fly in opposite directions.

#### **BLACKOUT**